Once the exterior shell of the lower levels of the central portion was nearly complete, work began on the structure of the dome. In this construction photo of the north elevation, the derricks are in place for constructing the dome.

About the History of Idaho's Capitol

Phase One: The Central Portion (1905-1912)

Compositionally, the exterior of the completed central portion consisted of the dome flanked by three abbreviated wings, one extending to the north, others to the west and east. Two monumental piers, supporting large granite orbs, define the monumental stair leading to the second-story entrance of the central portion from Jefferson Street. The entrance is sheltered by a projecting, three-story portico; the pediment being supported by four grand Corinthian columns. The bas-relief sculpture in the pediment presents a central wreath of stylized design. A framed bulls-eye, the centers of which have not been sculpted, is positioned above each of the three double entrances at the portico. The sandstone ceilings over the porch consist of one piece of stone, while the architrave over the columns was cut, horizontally, in half, to lighten the excessive weights that the derricks were put into service to lift.[102] The fifth story or attic level rises behind the pediment evolving into cantons at the corners. The south side of each canton is graced with a wreath bull's eye, which around the corners, at the east and west sides, evolve into singular roundels, illuminating the attic level. A simple cornice breaks the fifth story above the bull's eyes with sandstone courses and continues to a simple band of capping stones. The cantons are completed with smaller, centered oculli and winged acroterion. The parapet of the wings of the central portion exhibits a balustrade in bas-relief.

The exterior walls of the grade story, except for those enclosing the east and west ends of the building, which were slated for eventual demolition as preparation for the intended future additions, were constructed of sandstone sheathing, anchored to the brick wall. The base course or lower 2 feet of the grade story, and the monumental south stair were also built of granite. The remainder of the grade story through the fourth story and the base of the dome were sheathed in a light gray sandstone quarried from the Table Rock Quarry. The 1/4-inch joints were specified to be composed of one part cement and three parts sand mortar.[103] The brick masonry that underlies the stonework was to be laid in one part cement and four parts sand mortar with 3/8-inch joints. In contrast to the grand south entrance, the State Street or north entrance is a modest pair of doors accessing the first floor. Above this entrance, a recess at the second and third floors exhibits a tetrastyle ionic colonnade.

The dome rises above the Capitol's central mass with a peristyle of Corinthian columns encircling the drum and supporting a cornice, adorned with oversized urns positioned on consoles. Eight tripartite windows, altering with Corinthian pilasters, pierce the wall of the drum behind the columns. At the neck of the drum, an additional band of narrow rectangular windows, also bring natural light into the rotunda. A ring of small windows at the base of the terra cotta-sheathed dome illuminate the space between the rotunda ceiling and the outer dome.

At the top of the dome, a fenestrated sandstone lantern ornamented with columns is positioned within a balustraded walkway. A bronze-plated eagle atop the lantern completes the rise of the Capitol building to a height of 208 feet.

Office spaces at the various floor levels receive natural light via 1/1 double hung windows which diminish in height from the second to fourth story. It was specified in 1911 that the exterior woodwork be "painted" with four coats of white lead and pure raw linseed oil paint in colors as selected by the architect.[104]

The roof over the wings and dome was specified to be composed of reinforced concrete slabs made of one part Portland cement, two parts clean, sharp sand and four parts hazelnut gravel, further reinforced with woven wire equal to 1 percent of the area of concrete placed near the bottom of the slabs.[105] On the dome, the internal steelwork is covered with a 5 inch thick, waterproofed slab of reinforced concrete. So not to puncture the waterproof membrane, hoops of steel cable were placed around the entire circumference of the dome at different heights. The outer terra cotta tiles were anchored to the steel hoops.[106] All flat roofs and decks were specified to be covered in 18-ounce copper sheet metal attached to the concrete slab.[107] The upper skylight over the Supreme Court Chamber in the north wing was specified to be a steel structure covered partially with copper sheeting and glazed on the upper two-thirds of the dome.[108]

Plans for the exterior lighting of the dome called for an elaborate system of electric lights intended to "encircle cornices above the dome and also twinkle from all projections." To simplify the changing of bulbs, the lights were to be attached to chain belts.[109] It is unclear if this chain mechanism was implemented, but in April 1912, The Idaho Daily Statesman reported that electric wire conduits for 2,000 exterior lights were being installed.[110] In addition, a cross-section of the central portion (dated 1911), indicates electrical outlets be placed on the colonnade and console circumscribing the dome's drum. As the exterior of the central portion was being completed, the Capitol Commission began to focus on the implementation of interior systems and finishes. The Commission stated in its Third Report that "the complete dome should be constructed...before proceeding with any interior finish of the rotunda, on account of exposure to leakage and danger of falling materials if the dome was constructed later."[111] James Stewart & Company, a New York-based contractor, was hired as the General Contractor to complete the central portion above the base of the dome, excluding the dome steel.[112] Under the supervision of James Stewart and Company representative H.A. Dean,[113] this contract included finishing the interior of the building, except for the mechanical equipment.[114]

Layer upon layer, the dome rose above Boise in 1912. The sandstone columns of the peristyle encircle the dome's steel drum, and above this the structural members of the dome begin to suggest the soaring height of the completed building.

Bids for the mechanical systems to be integrated in the building were received in 1911; they were broken into four sections that included: (1) plumbing and vacuum cleaning systems (2) heating and ventilation systems (3) electric power

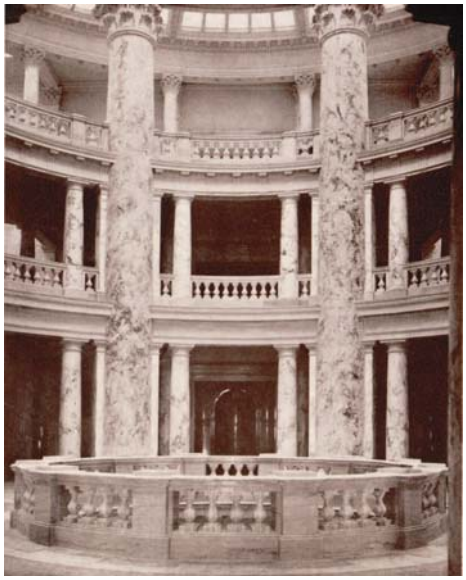
and lighting systems and (4) elevators. John F. Cooney of Twin Falls, Idaho, received the contrat for the first and second portions. The third section was divided between the Idaho Electric Company, supplying the electric wiring, conduits, telephone wiring, clock system and watchman recorders; and the Standard Engineering Company of Seattle, Washington, supplying the engines, generators and switchboard. Elevators and hydraulic lifts were supplied by Chicago's Otis Elevator Company, and the solid bronze front enclosures were contracted to the Standard Company.[115] In addition, a water cooling apparatus was supplied by the Harris Ice Machine Works of Portland, Oregon.[116] To power this machinery, a heating and lighting plant was constructed on land purchased by the Commission in 1905 located a block north of the Capitol on the southwest corner of Seventh and West Washington Streets.[117] The plant generated light and power for the Capitol and the exhaust steam was harnessed for heating the building. Four wells approximately 300 feet deep were drilled to provide a water plant for the Capitol.[118]

Installation of Interior Architecture and Finishes

The centerpiece of the completed central portion is the rotunda. A hierarchy of design in materials has been established through the classical treatment of architectural elements, as the rotunda radiates outward from the center and upward towards the dome.

The first floor level offers a view of the support system of the massive columns above. These rectangular bases, finished with marble panels, ring the compass-point marble pattern at the center of the floor. Light from above, penetrates to the first floor level through a circular opening, approximately 18 feet in diameter. This opening is ornamented with triglyphs and two rings of electric lights, decorative devices repeated throughout the Capitol. This ring is the first of a series of concentric rings, which rise into the rotunda's dome and define the floor levels.

At the second floor the eight towering Corinthian columns, crafted of scagliola, dominate the rotunda and reinforce the vertical thrust of the space. These three-story, 60-foot shafts are buttressed with single-story pilasters at each side. Smaller free-standing Doric columns, at the second floor, flank the pilasters. These column groupings are similar at the third floor, but are tied together by a horizontally articulated balustrade ringing the rotunda. At the fourth level, the colossal Corinthian columns are connected with the balustrade.



The columns of the rotunda were sheathed with scagliola, a thin decorative coating intended to mimic the appearance of marble. The smaller elements of the balustrades were cut of marble.

A wider circle of columns, Doric at the first, second and third floors, Corinthian at the fourth floor are set back from the inner ring, defining the walkway around the rotunda. These classical elements are repeated again as pilasters at the walls of the rotunda.

Asserting the play of natural light in the building, skylights in the fourth floor ceiling illuminate the rotunda. The corners of the rotunda, above the staircases, are also lit from above by skylights. Additionally, four-story light shafts, located at the intersections of the rotunda and main

corridors, captured sunlight and disbursed it to each level. Unfortunately, over time these light shafts have been compromised with numerous renovations and now serve as mechanical and electrical chases.

Above the fourth floor, a projecting ornamental molding supported by consoles of decorative acanthus leaves and detailed with dentils and a band of egg and dart relief, defines the base of the drum. A band of coffered panels, with eight tripartite windows seaparated by Corinthian pilasters rise above. Each of these windows has an architrave composed of pilasters supporting a classical entablature and crowned by a decorative bulbous cartouche. Finally, the top of the drum is articulated with a projecting miniature version of the lower ornamental molding, and another course of electric lights. The structure of the inner dome springs from this course and is lined with a coffered ceiling into which is set the rectangular windows of the clerestory.

The oculus of the inner dome, 11 feet in diameter and ringed with lights, looks upon a canvas of gold stars on a sky-blue background. The painted stars symbolizing Idaho's acceptance into the Union as the forty-third state.

The interior marble finishes for the entire central portion were supplied, set and cut by the Vermont Marble Company.[119] White marble with green veining, called American Pavanazzo, was specified for the pilasters of the central portion. Brocadillo marble was selected for the wainscoting and upper wall panels at the staircases and corridor, except for the bases, architraves, wainscot caps, molding and major door castings. These latter ornamental components, in addition to treads, risers, balustrades, floor tiles and floor borders, were of a white marble softly clouded with gray, from Tokeen, Alaska. To accent the main body of marble flooring, narrow strips of Lyonaise (a dark red marble), slightly wider strips of dark gray marble, called Livido, and a small amount of Verde Antique were integrated into the marble borders. All marbles were specified to be "hard, strong, dense marble [s], uniform in texture, density, etc."[120]

The hierarchy of material in the rotunda is also expressed in the use of marbles in the floor design. The center of the rotunda at the first floor exhibits a tri-colored display of red, black and deep gray marbles arranged in a compass-point design, radiating outward upon the light gray marble background. This motif is echoed at the second floor, radiating from the balustrade, expanding outwards towards the colossal columns. At each floor level, rings of red and deep gray marble radiate outward towards the walls of the rotunda where the design forms a border. Red and deep gray bands are repeated eastward and westward in the main corridors of the wings.

Skylights introduce the element of light into the fourth floor surrounding the rotunda.

The scagliola work was completed by the Michael Nocenti Company of New York City.[121] Scagliola is a plaster artform which originated in Italy in the sixteenth century.

Many workers, with a variety of expertise, were employed in finishing the rotunda.

The columns throughout the rotunda consist of a 3/16-inch sheath of gypsum, glue and pigment affixed to canvas and applied to a plastered surface. The scagliola imitates marble and disguises the columns' structural function, which is to support the dome above. The bases of the scagliola columns are marble and the capitals are of cast plaster, which has been hand finished, a process that refines its ornamental detailing.[122]

Smith & McCallin was hired as the contractor for interior plaster.[123] Plasterwork, including walls, ceilings, cornice work and ornament, was specified to be of Keene's cement or double refined gypsum hard wall plaster. Most of these surfaces were to be "brought to a perfect plane and to be polished down to resemble plate glass."[124] In contrast to the reflective surface desired for the walls, the paneled ceilings in the dome were textured with a course sand finish.[125]

In locations where a sand finish had been specified, the walls were to be kalsomined.[126] Kalsomine was an inexpensive, paint-like product, widely used in the late 1800s and into early 1900s. The product was a mixture of clear glue, whiting, water and pigments.

All the cornices and ornamental plasterwork were specified to be flat paint tinted ivory-white.[127] The interior wood trim and painting was contracted to Sierra Nevada Mill Company of Salt Lake City, Utah.[128] The electrical lighting installed in the rotunda consists of concentric rings of bulbs accentuating cornices and other ornamentation. Above the fourth floor, rising into the dome, there are four courses of lights with a total of 257 bulbs. Drawings indicate that the lower three courses were lit by 25-watt bulbs, with 60-watt bulbs placed in the uppermost course.

By April 15, 1912, the furniture, carpets and draperies had been selected for the central portion and were on display in a local Boise furniture store.[129] Each bidder for this contract had brought before the Commission samples of items he intended to furnish. From this preview, the Commission chose to hire the Wollaeger Manufacturing Company of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The Art Metal Construction Company of Jamestown, New York, was contracted to supply the vault fixtures and library shelving, and a local Boise firm, Brigger & Hetherington, supplied the electric lighting fixtures.[130] By the end of October 1912, The Idaho Daily Statesman reported that the scaffolding and derricks were being removed from around the dome and that the North Wing was expected to be ready for occupancy on November 25.[131] The specifications required that grading be done around the outside of the building after completion. The top 2 feet of grading were to be of black loam where clay and loam would be used against the concrete foundation.[132] By December 20, the central portion was officially accepted from the contractors.[133]

According to floor plans drafted in 1911, the basement of the central portion housed machinery for the building's mechanical systems, including rooms for fans and the elevator mechanism. The rotunda basement and north wing did not have use allocations specified on this set of drawings. On the first floor, the State Historical Society, State Library, Traveling Library and the Land Department occupied offices to the east and west of the rotunda. The State Library was connected by an internal staircase to the second floor. The Adjunct General and Immigration Commission held offices in the north wing of the first floor. All floors, above the first in the north wing, were delegated to the Supreme Court. These included the judges' private offices on the second and third floors and committee rooms and the court chamber on the third and fourth floors. On the second floor, the Governor's Suite occupied the offices just to the west of the rotunda, while the Secretary of State was housed east of the rotunda. Spaces on the third and fourth floors were allocated as private offices and committee rooms. The close proximity of these rooms to the Senate and House chambers suggests an intended use as legislative support space, although no specific use is indicated on Tourtellotte & Company's 1911 drawings.[134]

As had been established for the rotunda, a predominately white palette was used in the public corridors and semi-public spaces of the central portion. Openings into the central corridors were to have marble plinths and bases, with all remaining trim to be white enameled birch.[135] In a document prepared by Herbert Quigley for James Stewart & Company, Quigley specified that the moldings on top of the marble base throughout the building should be of straight-grain birch painted with white enamel paint.[136] It was reported in The Idaho Daily Statesman that the wood finish installed on the first and fourth floors was mahogany-stained birch, and the second and third floors were finished in African mahogany, although it is not indicated if these were treatments for both the public and private spaces.[137] On the third and fourth floors, the principal corridors and lobbies were to have marble wainscots and white enameled birch door casings and jambs.[138] The corridor leading to the Supreme Court Chamber on the third floor was an exception to this rule, having marble casings and jambs. The Supreme Court Chamber was finished in natural mahogany.[139]

The north wing, constructed with the central portion originally housed Idaho's Supreme Court. The Court Chamber (upper left), with its classical ornamentation, is the centerpiece of this wing.

Within the offices on the first floor, most woodwork, including doors, was mahogany-stained curly birch, excluding the white enameled trim in the toilet rooms. The second floor trim was specified as natural mahogany, and private toilets were to have marble bases and wood moldings. The corridor in the Supreme Court area of the second floor was to have white enameled birch finishes except for a mahogany sash and marble door casings. On the third floor, doors were to be mahogany and the private corridors were to have white enameled wood door casings and jambs with marble bases and floors. The Committee and Consultation rooms and

offices on this floor were to have mahogany finishes and a dado, while those on the fourth floor were to have mahogany stained birch finishes. All fourth floor doors were also of mahogany-stained birch. Closets throughout the central portion were to have marble bases and be finished in the poorer grade curly birch that had been found inferior for installation in the offices; the wood used in closet spaces was given a mahogany stain. The remaining portion of the inferior wood was to be used for the painted wood finish in the Capitol. Once the supply of poorer grade curly birch was depleted, straight birch was to be used for the painted wood finish throughout the building. There is an indication that shutters, made of painted birch, were hung on the exterior windows of the Supreme Court.[140]

Second floor rooms and those rooms marked "Committee" or "Consultation" rooms on the third and fourth floors were to have plaster cornices. The plaster cornices were to be omitted from rooms on the third and fourth floors marked "offices," instead, in these rooms the door and window casings were to have ornamental wood cornice tops. All rooms were to have either a chair rail or a dado, and any corridors or anterooms without a marble wainscot were to have a dado.[141] Certain rooms on the second floor, including those in the Governor's Suite, were specified to have hand-painted borders.[142]

Furnishings for the offices, supplied by Wollaeger Manufacturing Company, were constructed of Spanish mahogany. Both the flat and roll top desks made for the Capitol had brass bases on the legs. To match the desks, the chairs were finished with similar metal bases and upholstered in leather.[143] The Idaho Daily Statesman lauded the furniture's unique construction in that no moldings or molded surfaces were used, instead "all offsets [were] cut out in angles and all surfaces [were] true planes."[144] The draperies and carpets were also contracted through the Wollaeger. Carpets were specially designed for the reception room, corridors and the Governor's Private Office in the Governor's Suite. In addition, Wollaeger supplied draperies for the Governor's Suite and the Supreme Court Chamber.[145] The draperies and sunshades for both the Secretary of State's Office and the Governor's Suite were to be of the same design and pattern.[146]

Footnotes:

[102] Third Biennial Report of the Capitol Building Commission...State of Idaho, 1 January 1909, Idaho State Capitol Commission Papers, collection AR 18, box 6 (Boise: Idaho State Historical Society) 4.

[103, 104, 105, 107, 108, 122, 124, 125, 126, 127, 132, 142] John E. Tourtellotte and Co., Synopsis of the Specifications for Central Section of Idaho State Capitol, 1 January 1911, Idaho State Capitol Commission Papers, collection AR 18, box 5 (Boise: Idaho State Historical Society) 1,2,3,5,7,12,13,15.

[106, 137, 144] "State Capitol About Ready for Use," *The Idaho Statesman*, 20 October 1912, 8.

[109] "New State Capitol Building," *The Idaho Daily Statesman*, 31 December 1905, 18.

[110] "New Capitol Work Pushed Ahead with Figor," *The Idaho Statesman*, 14 April 1912, 16.

[111] Third Biennial report of the Capitol Building Commission...State of Idaho, 1 January 1909, Idaho State capitol Commission papers, collection AR 18, box 4 (Boise: Idaho State Historical Society) 5-6.

[112, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118 , 119, 121, 123, 128, 130] Fourth Biennial Report of the Capitol Building Commission...State of Idaho, 1 January 1909, Idaho State Capitol Commission Papers, collection AR 18, box 4 (Boise: Idaho State Historical Society) 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19.

[113] "Vermont Marble to Be Used in New Capitol," The Idaho Statesman, 31 July 1911, 8.

[120] Quality and Kinds of Marble, Idaho State Capitol Commission Papers, Collection AR 18, box 5 (Boise: Idaho State Historical Society).

[129, 143, 145] "Handsome Furniture and Carpets for Idaho," *The Idaho Statesman*, 15 April 1912, 7.

[131] "Work Complete on Dome of Capitol," *The Idaho Daily Statesman*, 31 October 1912, 12.

[133] Hauck, Eldon, *American Capitols: An Encyclopedia of the State, National and Territorial Capitol Edifices of the United States*, vol. 1 (London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1991) 55.

[134] J.E. Tourtellotte & Co. Drawings, Sheets No. 1-5, 17 June 1911, Idaho State Capitol Drawings.

[135, 136, 138, 139, 140, 141] Millwork Questions-Idaho State Capitol-Answered for James Stewart & Company, 11 & 18 December 1911, Idaho State Capitol Commission Papers, collection AR 18, box 10 (Boise: Idaho State Historical Society) 1,2,3,4.

[146] Capitol Commission Meeting Minutes, 14 March 1913, Idaho State Capitol Commission Papers, collection AR 18, box 4 (Boise: Idaho State Historical Society) 2.